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ABSTRACT

The Clinton administration's Partnerships for Stronger Families initiative, through working meetings, site visits, and outreach efforts, aimed to promote an ongoing conversation between those working on the front lines of services for children and families and those crafting federal policy and legislation in Washington. The initiative was guided by the vision that government must invest in prevention and early intervention programs for children, serve whole families, and measure success by results, not by numbers of dollars spent or people served. This report summarizes the initiative's work and recommendations. The first chapter of the report, "A Federal Focus on Families," includes sections detailing the 1994 meeting to launch the initiative, the progress noted at the March 1996 meeting," and further objectives devised at the December 1996 Meeting. The second chapter "A New Framework: Building Partnerships for Results," includes the following sections: (1) "Build Effective Partnerships" (including providing strong support from the top, helping communities and states gain access to the federal government, building communication with communities and states, restructuring federal technical assistance to build local capacity and strengthen partnerships; (2) "Ensure Increased Accountability for Results" (including developing national indicators to measure and track the well-being of America's children, and making federal programs more flexible). The third chapter, "Looking Ahead," outlines priorities for federal, state and local action, for nongovernmental organizations and private foundations, and the role of the Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL) Policy Exchange. The report's appendices include topics discussed at the December 1996 meeting,

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the Executive Order on Child and Family Statistics, and a list of participants at the December meeting. (EV)

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PARTNERSHIPS FOR STRONGER FAMILIES

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Building Intergovernmental Partnerships to Improve Results for Children and Families

The Policy Exchange
The Institute for Educational Leadership

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Partnerships for Stronger Families

A Vision Statement

In his 1996 State of the Union Address, President Clinton said: "Our first challenge is to cherish our children and strengthen America's families. Family is the foundation of American life. If we have stronger families, we will have a stronger America." This effort—Partnerships for Stronger Families—is about meeting that challenge and strengthening families. The following principles will guide our work:

Invest Early and Prevent Crises. Early intervention can help avoid the need for long-term supports. Attention and resources should focus on providing early help and support to enhance the strengths of families and prevent crises.

Respond to Families, Not Problems. Rather than drawing rigid boundaries between services and supports to families, government must be able to respond flexibly. Families do not come in neat packages, the supports they need do not fall into discrete programs, and governments cannot respond with "one-size-fits-all" policies. Each member of a family must be seen in the context of his or her family and community—not as a disconnected individual with isolated problems.

Account for Results. Success of these partnerships should be measured by results—good indicators of the strength of families and the growth of children—not by the dollars spent or the numbers of people serving or being served.

Facilitate and Support Local Efforts. The Clinton Administration is committed to support for bottom-up reform. Families live and work in communities, and efforts to improve on results should build on local initiatives. To be successful, partnerships for stronger families must engage all stakeholders in the community: neighborhood and community leaders, schools, nonprofit and for-profit organizations, local government, the faith community, the media, and families themselves.

Provide Opportunities for Parents to Meet Their Responsibility. In the end, successful partnerships for stronger families must build on the fundamental role of both parents in raising their children. Mothers, fathers, and other caregivers must accept their responsibility as nurturers, first teachers, partners with schools, mentors of their adolescents, and coaches during life transitions. Federal, state, and local policies should reinforce that critical responsibility and provide parents with opportunities to fulfill it.

PARTNERSHIPS FOR STRONGER FAMILIES

BUILDING INTERGOVERNMENTAL PARTNERSHIPS TO IMPROVE RESULTS FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Special Report #9

The Policy Exchange
THE INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP
1997

THE VICE PRESIDENT
WASHINGTON

June 1997

President Clinton and I place a top priority on families and children. Over the past two years, the Partnerships for Stronger Families initiative has promoted an ongoing dialogue with those working on the front lines of service for children and families and those crafting federal policy and legislation in Washington. This partnership has shown us how the federal government can be a more effective partner with state and local governments and communities to support the well-being of America's families and children.

We are committed to a nation of strong, caring, and nurturing families and communities that keep children healthy and safe, ensure that they come to school every day ready to learn, and help them to become productive citizens. The federal government can be most effective when it focuses on results and works in partnership with states and communities to achieve these results.

I want to thank all those who have been involved in this valuable initiative. Your innovative efforts have helped us to develop new and better ways to work for the benefit of all of America's families. I look forward to continuing this productive partnership.

Al Gore

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The IEL Policy Exchange is grateful to the many people
who contributed their ideas, talent and energy to producing this publication.

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"When families thrive, communities flourish, and our nation reaps the benefits."

PRESIDENT BILL CLINTON

INTRODUCTION

The landscape of government programs for children and families is changing, with local and state governments taking the lead to develop comprehensive approaches that strengthen families and revitalize neighborhoods. Communities are creating youth development initiatives, family support centers, and neighborhood development organizations. Many states are setting broad goals, developing strategic plans and revamping local governance structures to ensure better results for families and communities. Other states, including Oregon and Iowa, have developed specific "benchmarks" or indicators of the status of children, the environment, and the economy, and are tracking their progress toward those goals. Minnesota publishes "Kids Can't Wait" progress reports to help local communities evaluate how well they are meeting the needs of children and families.

The trailblazers in these innovative efforts insist that the federal government can—and must—do a better job of promoting and sustaining local initiatives. Federal support is critical to community efforts to reach such national priorities as having healthy children, well educated citizens, and a strong economy. Because public resources are limited, the urgent needs of children and families require leaders who will rethink the traditional federal role in supporting this work in communities and states.

Vice President Al Gore emphasized the need to shift from the traditional top-down federal approach when he told the U.S. Conference of Mayors in 1995: "Let's put the days of almighty, holier-than-thou, Mister Know-It-All Washington behind us. . . and become partners."

That shift has begun. During its first term, the Clinton Administration undertook major initiatives to emphasize partnerships, local ownership, and shared accountability for results:

> In more than 100 Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities, residents are deciding how best to use federal funds to revitalize their distressed neighborhoods.
>
> The federal government has developed formal partnership agreements, based on accountability for results, with Oregon and Connecticut.
>
> Teams from several federal agencies and levels of government, led by the Department of Justice, are working with residents in Denver, Atlanta, Washington, DC, and the state of Nebraska to make their streets and neighborhoods safer. This initiative has sparked similar public safety partnerships in cities across the country.

Recent changes in federal legislation have enabled federal agencies and departments to change the way they work with states and communities. Under the reauthorized Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the Department of Education now allows greater flexibility for states and communities to develop comprehensive education plans using funds from multiple federal programs. The Department of Health and Human Services funds family preservation programs to support community-based initiatives for families who are in crisis or at risk of having children removed from their homes. The Department of Labor, through recently enacted "Work Flex" legislation, allows the Secretary of Labor to waive requirements of the Job Training Partnership Act for states with approved plans to improve their workforce development systems.

While new programs and practices are expanding the federal government's capacity to work in partnership with communities, many families—particularly those living in low-income, inner city neighborhoods and rural areas—do not yet feel the positive impact of these efforts. These families and communities still experience bureaucratic and inflexible programs and one-size-fits-all solutions. For them the barriers to success remain, and the pace of change is still too slow.

"Your innovative work in communities has helped us to question and re-examine old assumptions."

VICE PRESIDENT AL GORE

A FEDERAL FOCUS ON FAMILIES

When White House staff and agency representatives were working to plan the Empowerment Zone and Enterprise Community initiatives in 1994, they examined programs around the country that were successful in strengthening families and revitalizing communities. This interagency working group, later called Partnerships for Stronger Families, sought to promote comprehensive and effective strategies on a broad scale.

The work of this partnership was guided by the vision of state and community leaders: government must invest in prevention and early intervention programs for children, serve whole families, and measure success by results, not by the numbers of dollars spent or people served. The Partnerships initiative reflects a federal commitment to providing top-down support for bottom-up initiatives, with an emphasis on encouraging local decision making. It also reflects a strong belief that families, not governments, raise children, but that all institutions—government, religious, civic, and private—can and should play a positive role in strengthening families. *(See the Vision Statement inside the front cover.)*

The White House Domestic Policy Council led the Partnerships initiative at the federal level, in cooperation with the National Performance Review, the Community Empowerment Board, the President's Crime Prevention Council, and six domestic federal agencies. The Institute for Educational Leadership's Policy Exchange was the primary non-governmental partner, working to facilitate, shape, and support this effort.

The Partnerships initiative supported interaction and mutual understanding between leaders in Washington and those from communities across the country for more than two years, through a series of meetings and site visits. Vice President Gore noted the impact of these exchanges when he welcomed state and local leaders to the December 1996 Partnerships for Stronger Families working meeting. "Your innovative work in communities has helped us to question and re-examine old assumptions," the Vice

President said. "We are seeking to work cooperatively at the federal, state and local levels as you have been working within your communities to improve the lives of families and children."

1994 Meeting Launches Initiative

In July 1994, the Domestic Policy Council invited more than 50 representatives of community organizations, service providers, and state and local leaders to meet with federal representatives in Washington, DC. "We are drawn here," William Galston, then Deputy Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy, told the participants, "by a shared understanding that most children and young people need more opportunities to develop and thrive. . . yet the fragmented ways that we typically try to help them are part of the problem."

". . . most children and young people need more opportunities to develop and thrive . . . yet the fragmented ways that we typically try to help them are part of the problem."

WILLIAM GALSTON
Deputy Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy

For a day and a half, federal staff heard first-hand from these state and local leaders about the challenges and rewards of developing school- and community-based services for children and families. For example, participants described a promising effort in St. Louis, where state agencies and a private foundation collaborate to provide comprehensive services for children and their families. They also heard from an initiative in Harlem, where parents at an elementary school rallied the community to create a safer environment for the students. A community leader described how the initial success at their school in Harlem sparked residents to undertake broader efforts to improve economic conditions in the neighborhood.

This first working meeting identified the major challenges facing federal, state and community leaders who want to improve family services, including the need to simplify programs and improve technical assistance to support communities undertaking comprehensive initiatives. Several participants called on the federal government to take a more supportive approach to serving children and families instead of trying to fix problems. "We've got to rely on our families as resources. . . and learn how to identify and build on their strengths," noted Tania Alameda, director of Miami's Bureau of Children's Affairs.

As community leaders described successful initiatives, their overwhelming message was that the current federal system often creates barriers to success for community-driven, comprehensive programs for families and children. One speaker noted that federal programs that serve only very specific populations "force us to squeeze people into boxes and then try to find ways around the boxes." Community leaders also described the challenges of developing collaboration among local providers who administer separate programs.

The 1994 meeting set the stage for federal, state and local leaders to exchange ideas and propose solutions to the issues confronting children, families, and communities. This working meeting and the two that followed it helped to identify how federal resources can be used effectively to strengthen families and communities.

From Dialogue to Results: The March 1996 Meeting

A second working meeting in March 1996 convened educators, policy makers, and service providers from fourteen states and communities within those states, as well as federal staff from White House offices and the Departments of Agriculture, Education, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, Justice, Labor, and Commerce. In contrast to the July 1994 event, which promoted successful community-based strategies, this meeting focused on the role of states in improving outcomes for families and children. There was a productive discussion among federal and bipartisan state leaders who met together in small groups to exchange ideas and develop strategies.

Cheryl Sullivan, then Secretary of the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration, set the tone for the meeting when she urged participants to "fix our sights on families, and then design programs and policies around their needs." Responding to that challenge, federal and state leaders worked together to identify strategies to promote stronger families through partnerships among federal, state and local governments. The major strategies were:

Build capacity. Communities must be able to develop effective leaders and use resources wisely if they are to take on more responsibility for decision making. They can benefit from technical assistance to increase the knowledge and skills of local leaders, build new relationships with schools and health care providers, and learn from other communities.

Improve accountability for results. A new definition of accountability pays attention to measuring results—like the number of children who are able to read by third grade—instead of just inputs—like the number of clients served. Results must be well defined and measurable, and partners must agree on how they will reach them, in order to target resources to produce better results for families and children.

Strengthen data and information systems. Accurate and meaningful data about the conditions of children and families can help communities implement programs that will improve results. Federal, state and local governments must ensure that the data they produce are reliable and accurately reflect the conditions of children and families, and then ensure that these data are disseminated to those who need to use them. The federal government must also simplify the ways that states and communities report on programs funded by multiple agencies so that comprehensive efforts are not constrained by requirements to produce inconsistent and overlapping data.

Streamline the bureaucracy. Federal agencies often require states and communities to prepare separate applications, submit to multiple review processes, and keep specific records for each program they administer. Federal support for comprehensive approaches at the community level would reduce or eliminate multiple applications and reporting requirements, simplify federal waiver review processes, and allow communities to combine funding for administration and programs. Legislative changes would be required to ease many of these requirements.

Increase financing flexibility. Communities need to be able to use federal funds as an important component of integrated local approaches. Congress could help by structuring federal funding to create incentives for communities to develop comprehensive prevention programs that achieve results. Long-term funding for programs is essential so that initiatives can sustain momentum and demonstrate results.

Following this meeting, leaders at the Domestic Policy Council decided to work more intensively to build federal support for state and local initiatives. A steering committee of senior staff from the White House and federal agencies worked to turn recommendations from the working meeting into an action plan.

In May 1996, the steering committee formed five federal interagency action teams to develop concrete proposals to change programs and policies, based

on input from states and communities. The teams were organized to develop specific recommendations for intergovernmental partnerships, financing flexibility, accountability, technical assistance, and information dissemination. Each team met regularly during the next six months to develop its proposals and report to the steering committee.

The Institute for Educational Leadership was a catalyst and convener for this initiative. IEL staff convened small group meetings and connected the action teams to outside initiatives and non-governmental groups. Site visits to Connecticut and Philadelphia provided action team members with opportunities to experience "the system" from state and local perspectives.

Looking Ahead: The December 1996 Meeting

In December 1996, state and community leaders again joined federal staff in Washington—this time to review and propose additions to recommendations from the action teams. A White House advisor noted, "We needed a reality check from states and communities to make sure we were on the right track."

The December meeting set the work with families and children within the broader context of global economic and employment trends, which place greater economic pressure on many American families and communities. How do tighter state and local budgets change the way communities provide services for children and families? What impact will dramatic reforms of entitlement programs like welfare have on community programs? And how can states and communities make stronger connections between human and economic development? "These changes," then Secretary of Labor Robert Reich told participants, "push us to rethink how we do our work, and who needs to be at the table."

"We invited you because of the tremendous strides that you are making in states and communities around the country."

CAROL RASCO
Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy

A clear message emerged from the December 1996 working meeting: a "top-down, one-size-fits-all" federal approach does not work. The federal government must become a more responsive partner with states and communities. In welcoming state and local leaders to the meeting, Carol Rasco, then Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy, underscored the importance of learning from all who are involved. "We invited you," she said, "because of the tremendous strides that you are

making in states and communities around the country." Rasco urged participants to "help us continue to build this new kind of partnership," where federal, state and local leaders learn from each other. (For a complete listing of participants see Appendix III, *List of Participants in the December 1996 Working Meeting.*)

While some state and community leaders may prefer the "feed us and leave us alone" approach of no-strings-attached block grants, many agree that shared responsibility, with negotiated agreements about results and consequences, is crucial to improving outcomes for families and children. These state and community leaders advocated for expanding federal/state partnerships like the Oregon Option, the Connecticut Neighborhood Revitalization Partnership, the Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities, and individual agency "performance partnerships" that involve states and communities in determining the most important goals to be achieved with federal resources.

At the end of the December meeting, Elaine Kamarck, senior policy advisor to Vice President Gore, led an "open mike" discussion about the federal role in programs for children and families. "It's our job," she said, "to keep shaking up the bureaucracy." For an hour and a half, participants talked about their views of how the federal government could effectively support intergovernmental partnerships. (For a complete listing of the questions posed by Ms. Kamarck, see Appendix I, *Promoting Intergovernmental Partnerships: The Federal Role*). The responses to these questions demonstrated the participants' strong interest in building effective federal/state/local partnerships.

"It's our job to keep shaking up the bureaucracy."

ELAINE KAMARCK
Senior Policy Advisor to the Vice President

A New Framework: Building Partnerships for Results

Emerging federal/state/community partnerships provide valuable lessons:

> Effective intergovernmental partnerships can improve results for families and children; and
>
> All levels of government—local, state, and federal—must focus on the results they want to achieve, and allow greater local discretion in exchange for shared accountability for results.

These lessons provide a framework for change developed by those who participated in the Partnerships for Stronger Families initiative.

Build Effective Partnerships

Provide strong support from the top.
Interagency and intergovernmental partnerships will not survive on innovative ideas and good intentions alone. They require sufficient budget, staff, and administrative support to achieve their goals. A strong central support structure, based in the White House and including representatives from multiple federal agencies, is essential to successful federal participation in partnerships.

The organizing structure must be backed by a commitment from the highest levels to promote these new partnerships throughout the federal government, including the agencies' regional offices. Some community representatives urged the Domestic Policy Council and the Vice President's office to implement a "massive education effort" to help staff in the federal regional offices support the work of Empowerment Zones and other comprehensive community efforts. "The White House commitment must be

there for it to work," said a community advocate from Connecticut, "or it can be devastating at the local level."

Help communities and states open the "front door" to the federal government.

States and communities seeking to work in partnership with the federal government need help in penetrating federal bureaucracies and establishing effective working relationships with agency staff. Federal agencies are using a variety of strategies to help states and communities make better connections across federal programs and departments. Some examples include:

> Each Secretary's Regional Representative in the Department of Housing and Urban Development coordinates a team of regional HUD staff members to connect Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities with sources of information, technical assistance, and funding from all federal agencies.
>
> For the Oregon Option, the National Performance Review convenes a group of key federal agency staff to work with state partners and develop the best ways to use federal resources for priority results identified by Oregonians.
>
> A Department of Housing and Urban Development employee acts as the single point of contact for the Connecticut Neighborhood Revitalization Partnership.
>
> The Department of Justice has been working with local communities to develop "community desks" to provide specific communities with a single point of contact for all department grants, activities and supports.

Many community and state leaders support the idea of a "single point of contact" within the federal bureaucracy—someone who can help communities cut through the maze of program rules and facilitate communication with federal agencies. A director of children's programs from New York City stressed that this person must be a respected broker who can make "electrician-type connections" between federal agencies and communities. In San Francisco, a single point of contact for the Enterprise Community, based in the Mayor's Office, has resolved problems as they arose.

"The partnership effort should focus more on changing the culture of the intergovernmental relationship, not just coordinating programs."

CONNIE REVELL
Director of the Oregon Option

Connie Revell, Director of the Oregon Option, noted that "the partnership effort should focus more on changing the culture of the intergovernmental relationship, not just coordinating programs." Oregon offers a different model, with clusters of federal, state and local leaders organizing their efforts to make progress toward specific outcomes. Revell described their "adhocracy" approach, in which a key aide at the National Performance Review was able to marshal federal agency staff when Oregon needed help to resolve specific problems.

While this federal single point of contact can act as convener, respected broker, ambassador from the government, or community advocate, state and local leaders made it clear that the negotiating skill and clout of the person in the role is what makes it work. Describing her experiences with generalists assigned to facilitate the Empowerment Zone work, one local official noted that "It's pot luck who you get . . . it could be a miracle or a disaster." When a key federal aide suggested that communities should have a voice in selecting the person or process to coordinate their partnerships, the group broke into applause.

Build communication with communities and states.
The federal government can support intergovernmental initiatives by increasing communication with state and local partners and among existing partnerships. Technology can help; the Partnerships for Stronger Families web site offers easy access through the Internet to federal program resources for families and children. This new tool in the effort to build strong intergovernmental alliances was introduced at the December 1996 meeting. The web site features a comprehensive listing of federal programs for children and families, as well as Notices of Funding Availability (NOFAs). It also provides a single point of access to all federal agency web sites with information about programs for children and families. The Partnerships for Stronger Families web site is located at http://family.info.gov.

More than three-fourths of the participants in the December working meeting indicated that they had access to the Internet or expected to be connected to it soon. State and local leaders who visited the web site saw it as a valuable resource for up-to-date information about government programs and funding sources, and asked that it be extended to increase interactive communication among federal, state and local partners. This

information dissemination effort is now being expanded to a broader web site geared to state and local staff, called the U.S. State and Local Gateway. This site, still under development, will serve as an electronic one-stop shop for federal information relevant to states and localities.

Restructure federal technical assistance to build local capacity and strengthen partnerships.

Traditional federal technical assistance supports specific programs, but does not build community capacity to meet the challenges facing children and families. As states and communities take more responsibility for planning and implementing comprehensive initiatives, they need more technical support for their efforts. There is often a mismatch between a community's technical assistance needs and the federal resources they can use to support their efforts. For example, a community may need technical assistance to *plan* and *finance* a comprehensive initiative, but may only be able to gain assistance to *operate* a drug abuse prevention program.

In the Partnerships for Stronger Families initiative, the interagency action team on technical assistance met with managers, providers and customers of federal technical assistance and developed a new vision for federal technical assistance that:

Forms partnerships—both among agencies within the federal government and among federal, state and local governments to design and deliver technical assistance;

Allows communities to choose among technical assistance providers according to their needs;

Makes training and technical assistance available to local initiatives when they need it;

Improves communication and collaboration among federal agencies, communities and technical assistance providers;

Supports community efforts to develop collaboration;

Makes effective use of all resources and expertise within communities; and

Holds technical assistance providers accountable to communities.

This vision of federal technical assistance draws on the experience of successful efforts at the local, state and national levels. In Indianapolis, for example, the city works to help neighborhood organizations plan, develop budgets, and raise funds so that they can become self sustaining. In Michigan, the state government has used federal and state funding to create an interagency technical assistance institute that supports comprehensive community-based partnerships for children and families.

The federal School-to-Work Opportunities Act incorporates a customer-driven system of technical assistance that allows grantees to get the assistance they need when they need it. The National School-to-Work Learning Center, under a contract with the federal government, maintains a resource bank of consultants qualified to assist states and communities in specific aspects of developing School-to-Work programs. Each School-to-Work grantee is allocated a "line of credit," a specific amount of funding that they can use to "purchase" technical assistance from the resource bank.

State and community leaders stressed developing existing community resources. They also recommended that federal programs give greater attention to developing community capacity to sustain comprehensive partnerships and community initiatives, rather than focusing only on implementing individual programs. Sue Cameron, a county commissioner in Oregon, urged that federal resources be made available to help communities "grow their own experts."

State and local participants at the working meeting strongly advocated that the federal government build networks for "peer to peer" technical assistance, so that individuals from one community can support similar efforts in other communities. Many of those who work at the community and state levels believe that they learn the most from others who have had similar experiences.

Ensure Increased Accountability for Results

"It all begins," explains independent consultant Barbara Dyer, "with an assumption that all parties to the partnership are jointly accountable for improved results for families and children." For decades, the federal government has required states and localities to demonstrate that they are fiscally and legally accountable for process: the way they spend money

"The great trade-off is for government to get out of the business of micro-managing the process, and get into the business of looking at results."

ELAINE KAMARCK
Senior Policy Advisor to the Vice President

and operate programs. These programs and initiatives must now also be able to demonstrate to the federal agencies that they can make progress toward the *results* they were created to reach. "The great trade-off," explains Vice Presidential advisor Kamarck, "is for government to get out of the business of micro-managing the process, and get into the business of looking at results." Within the context of intergovernmental and interagency partnerships, accountability means a shared commitment to make progress toward definable goals. That means sharing risks as well as rewards.

As part of the overall shift toward increased accountability for results, federal programs and agencies are changing the way they work. The Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) requires all federal agencies to set specific long-term goals, generate measurable performance indicators, and report on progress by the 1999 fiscal year. Some agencies, including the Department of Health and Human Services and the Environmental Protection Agency, are developing formal performance partnerships to work with states and communities to improve outcomes in areas such as child health and the environment.

Yet those who have started down this road know it is difficult to determine fair and reasonable ways to measure progress or failure. "Everyone is for performance measurement in the abstract," a community leader from Oregon noted, "but as usual, the devil is in the details." It is important to define issues and expectations in clear, understandable language, and to build public understanding and buy-in for these changes. A meeting participant from New York warned that "if community leaders need Ph.D.s to understand these ideas about accountability, then we're not doing our jobs."

State and community leaders agree it is a challenge to bring about strong systems of accountability for results. These systems are a radical departure from decades of "business as usual" in government programs. State and local data needed to track performance and progress are often not available. The current system too often provides disincentives for improving results—by reducing funding for programs that are successful. "What incentives are there to be accountable?" asked a local official from Los Angeles. "If you're making a difference, they punish you." While many government leaders at all levels are committed to pursuing

the principles of accountability, they cautioned that much more work will be needed before governments can expect to demonstrate broad accountability for results.

The need for public trust in government may be the strongest incentive for change. The movement toward managing for results continues throughout the country at all levels of government. Some federal agencies are moving ahead more quickly than others; even within a single agency, some programs are making more progress toward accountability than others. Some states are considered pioneers, and some communities are ahead of the pack, but most jurisdictions are moving in this direction. The federal government can support these efforts with specific actions.

Develop national indicators to measure and track the well-being of children.

Before states and communities can be held accountable for results, they need to have usable data about the children and families they serve. Good information about the conditions of children helps communities to decide how and where to invest their resources and to determine whether their programs and initiatives are leading to better results.

Responding to the need for accurate and useful data, the Office of Management and Budget joined with federal statistical and research agencies in 1994 to increase the coordination of statistical information on children and families by forming the Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics. Individual agencies were releasing data and providing hundreds of measures, explained Duane Alexander, director of the National Institute for Child Health and Human Development, "but no one agency was pulling it all together."

The Department of Health and Human Services, in cooperation with the Interagency Forum, commissioned the first report on the condition of families and children. This report, *Trends in the Well-being of America's Children and Youth: 1996*, covers the areas of children's economic security, health, and education. Leaders within the Interagency Forum recognized a need to develop a smaller, more easily understood list of indicators derived from this report and to publish it.

The group of 30 indicators selected by Interagency Forum members to portray the full range of issues concerning children and families was previewed for the participants at the December 1996 working meeting. In introducing the proposed annual summary report, federal leaders

emphasized its role in improving results for families and children. "As a nation," Deputy Assistant Secretary of Health and Human Services Ann Rosewater explained, "we track everything from the rise and fall of the economy to environmental quality indicators. It's time to measure the well-being of our children." Indicators which are likely to be part of this annual report include the percentages of:

Children living under 50%, 100% and 150% of the federal poverty level;

Children with at least one resident parent employed full-time, full year;

Children who have received a full series of vaccinations;

Youths who are victims of crime; and

Children who attend early childhood education programs.

On April 21, 1997, President Clinton signed an Executive Order formally establishing the Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics and ordering the Forum to submit an annual report to the President on the well-being of children, using the most recently available data. State and local leaders agree that having specific data on the condition of children will heighten public awareness and help states and communities move toward a system of accountability for results. (See Appendix II, *Executive Order on Child and Family Statistics.*)

One concern about the annual report on indicators of the well-being of children is that good information about families and children is desperately needed at the state and local levels, but is very difficult and expensive to develop. Private sector organizations and some states are providing leadership in this area. The Annie E. Casey Foundation publishes *Kids Count,* an annual report card that lists state-by-state data on key measures of the well-being of children. Oregon, Minnesota and Vermont, as well as other states, report and track statistical data on the conditions of families and children over time.

Many states and communities, however, do not yet have the capability to produce good data on the conditions of children. The need for timely, accurate information at the community level deserves priority consideration from all levels of government.

Make federal programs more flexible.
If governments and communities are going to be held accountable for improving the lives of families and children, they need greater discretion in adapting federal programs to community needs. A director for human resources in North Carolina explained: "Communities should be able to tailor funding to meet their particular needs, but they also must be able to measure what is working and what is not."

The federal government has responded to the demand for additional flexibility by granting waivers of some statutory and regulatory provisions to states who request them. But the waiver process can be time consuming and frustrating for states and communities that want to move ahead quickly to improve results. The formal waiver application and review process also puts states in the role of supplicants instead of partners.

Some recent legislative initiatives provide broader financial flexibility for states. The School-to-Work Opportunities Act gives parents, teachers, and school districts greater control over how federal education dollars are spent in their communities. A new "Work Flex" provision gives the Secretary of Labor the authority to waive provisions of the Job Training Partnership Act for states that have approved workforce development plans.

State and community leaders underscore the urgent need to relax federal categorical and restrictive funding. "I don't think you ought to wait three years to remove some of these bureaucratic barriers. You ought to do it next week, or maybe next month," one state legislator said. Concrete proposals to tackle this problem have emerged from discussions with state and local partners. Some of these can be addressed by the Executive Branch alone, while others will require action by the Congress:

"I don't think you ought to wait three years to remove some of these bureaucratic barriers. You ought to do it next week, or maybe next month."

A STATE LEGISLATOR

Help communities understand existing flexibility. Communities need support for capacity building and technical assistance, and more information on best practices in this area. Leaders urged the federal agencies to develop guidebooks for states and communities including "how to" information on existing approaches to flexibility and blended financing strategies. Many local and state policymakers and staff are not aware of provisions in new federal laws that provide flexibility.

"We need to get rid of the silos that dispense only one type of grain."

STEVE HEASLEY
Governor's Cabinet on Children and Families in West Virginia

Provide incentives for communities to serve families in more integrated, comprehensive ways. For states and communities trying to provide comprehensive, integrated programs for children and families, the ability to consolidate multiple funding streams is a top priority. State and local leaders strongly support legislative initiatives to allow communities to shift funding among specific programs and projects to create integrated comprehensive initiatives. Steve Heasley, of the Governor's Cabinet on Children and Families in West Virginia, voiced the widespread frustration of dealing with federal categorical programs. "We need to get rid of the silos that dispense only one type of grain," he urged, "so that we can make multigrain bread rather than just white bread."

Develop new ways to negotiate flexibility. There is a need to address flexibility issues through partnerships among multiple layers of government and across agencies. In developing waiver requests, for example, federal partners should be involved from the beginning, not just as arbiters at the end of the process. In intergovernmental partnerships, all players have a role in negotiating specific agreements about outcomes, indicators, and interim measurements.

Support federal legislation to expand state and local flexibility. There was support from some state and local leaders for federal legislation similar to the Local Empowerment and Flexibility Act, which was introduced in 1995 to allow communities with approved "local flexibility plans" to waive federal laws and regulations that get in the way of implementing those plans. Some suggested developing a more targeted approach to "local flex" in specific areas like crime prevention or youth programs.

Many state and local leaders believe the federal role is primarily to assist them in improving outcomes for families and children, whether by loosening bureaucratic rules, simplifying funding categories, or providing effective technical assistance and training. They warned against the federal government going into overdrive to develop new programs or require that new collaborative efforts be initiated. "Don't ask people to constantly reinvent themselves," they said. "Allow us to build on strengths and resources in each community."

LOOKING AHEAD

The Partnerships for Stronger Families initiative, through its working meetings, site visits, and outreach efforts, promoted an ongoing conversation between those working on the front lines of services for children and families and those crafting federal policy and legislation in Washington. The effort engaged a diverse group of committed individuals, provided valuable networking opportunities, and developed a unique level of access and interaction among federal, state, and local leaders. It also pushed participants to "think outside the box" on issues dealing with families and children, and sharpened their understanding of the possibilities and challenges of a more collaborative, results-driven approach. (See Appendix III, *Participants in the December 1996 Working Meeting.*)

But many state and local leaders want to accelerate the process, particularly in light of the impending changes in welfare and their immediate impact on families in their communities. "Welfare reform is the biggest game in town," noted Ed Tetelman from the New Jersey Department of Human Services, whose department is working with everyone from banks to law enforcement and the state transportation department to figure out how to respond to their new welfare responsibilities.

"Welfare reform is the biggest game in town."

ED TETELMAN
New Jersey Department of Human Services

As noted above, the December 1996 meeting closed with an opportunity for state and local leaders to be more specific about the next steps for the federal government. Many of these participants returned to their communities, engaged in a wider discussion about the issues of intergovernmental partnerships, and relayed their responses to the Institute for Educational Leadership.

The following section summarizes recommendations from participants as well as a larger circle of policymakers and practitioners throughout the course of the initiative. Because intergovernmental partnerships require

changes in the roles of all partners, the section includes recommendations for state and local governments, as well as foundations and non-governmental organizations.

Priorities for Federal Action

Support legislation to provide additional flexibility for states and communities to use federal funds, while ensuring accountability for results and helping vulnerable children and families to become strong.

Develop publications to help communities understand how to use federal resources to help children and families.

Disseminate information about successful state and local practices that use existing flexibility in federal funding to improve results for children and families.

Provide opportunities to share information about successful practices among federal, state, and local policymakers and practitioners, using electronic communication including an expanded web site, site visits, working meetings, and focus groups.

Review the process of requesting and responding to waivers and revise it to involve all partners in developing solutions and to reduce the time required to resolve waiver requests.

Ensure that federal technical assistance supports communities by expanding opportunities for communities to learn from one another and to choose their own technical assistance providers.

Develop federal interagency teams at the regional level to help state and community initiatives for children and families make effective use of federal resources.

Priorities for State and Local Action

Engage a broad range of stakeholders at the state and local levels in planning partnership efforts to improve results for children and families. Reward and publicize successful collaborations.

Define priority needs and results to be accomplished through partnerships.

Define state and local needs for flexibility in federal programs.

Develop information systems for tracking and reporting progress on results for children and families.

Review existing technical assistance and use it to support partnerships and collaborative strategies for children and families.

Priorities for Non-governmental Organizations and Private Foundations

Convene individuals across political, agency, and governmental lines to build understanding of key issues in intergovernmental partnerships, including funding flexibility and accountability for results.

Continue to push change from the bottom up, and to document the progress and outcomes of emerging intergovernmental partnerships. Communicate lessons from these partnerships to the federal government and to states and communities.

The Role of the IEL Policy Exchange

The IEL Policy Exchange promotes policies and programs that foster effective and collaborative policies on issues affecting children, youth, families and communities. The Policy Exchange has a special interest in intergovernmental initiatives—the changing roles of government at the federal, state, and local levels.

The IEL Policy Exchange has acted as a non-governmental partner throughout the development of the Partnerships for Stronger Families initiative. In 1997, the Policy Exchange is continuing to work closely with federal efforts affecting children and families, building on the work of the Partnerships initiative. At the same time, the Policy Exchange is expanding its focus to work with several state and local partnerships by using "action research" strategies to bring their issues and agendas to the attention of federal agencies. IEL staff will work to gain deeper understanding of the issues from state and local perspectives; engage local, state, and federal players to define the barriers; identify areas of unmet potential and propose resolution strategies; keep track of the progress and products of the partnership and disseminate the results. The Policy Exchange plans to develop and disseminate a series of issue briefs to share and promote learning from intergovernmental partnerships.

APPENDIX I

PROMOTING INTERGOVERNMENTAL PARTNERSHIPS: THE FEDERAL ROLE

Questions posed by Elaine Kamarck, Senior Policy Advisor to the Vice President at the Partnerships for Stronger Families Working Meeting, December 1996

What federal legislation should be enacted in the next year to support intergovernmental partnerships?

Which funding streams should be combined?

What flexibilities currently exist but are underused?

What should the federal government **stop** doing right now?

What is the federal government not doing that it ought to be doing?

What are the comparative advantages and disadvantages of waivers versus legislative change?

What programs or flexibilities should skip states and go directly to communities?

The federal "single point of contact:" is it useful? At what level is it most useful?

Is there a need for a radically new approach to federal technical assistance (*e.g.* block grants)?

APPENDIX II

THE WHITE HOUSE
OFFICE OF THE PRESS SECRETARY

Executive Order #13045

PROTECTION OF CHILDREN FROM ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH RISKS AND SAFETY RISKS

April 21, 1997

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, it is hereby ordered as follows:

Sec. 6. Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics.

6-601. The Director of the OMB ("Director") shall convene an Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics ("Forum"), which will include representatives from the appropriate Federal statistics and research agencies. The Forum shall produce an annual compendium ("Report") of the most important indicators of the well-being of the Nation's children.

6-602. The Forum shall determine the indicators to be included in each Report and identify the sources of data to be used for each indicator. The Forum shall provide an ongoing review of Federal collection and dissemination of data on children and families, and shall make recommendations to improve the coverage and coordination of data collection and to reduce duplication and overlap.

6-603. The Report shall be published by the Forum in collaboration with the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. The Forum shall present the first annual Report to the President, through the Director, by July 31, 1997. The Report shall be submitted annually thereafter, using the most recently available data.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

APPENDIX III

PARTNERSHIPS FOR STRONGER FAMILIES

Working Meeting
December 3-4

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Who Controls Major Federal Programs for Children & Families: Rube Goldberg Revisited, Special Report #3, 1995, $20 (including two color posters)

A Primer on Program Rules for Five Major Federal Programs—AFDC, Food Stamps, Medicaid, Section 8 Housing and Public Housing, Special Report #4, 1995, $15

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Partnerships for Stronger Families: Building Intergovernmental Partnerships to Improve Results for Children and Families, Special Report #9, 1997

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Simulation Hearing on Obtaining Federal and State Assistance (Transcript of a March 27, 1995 Congressional Hearing), 1995, $5

Comprehensive Strategies for Children and Families: Report on an October 4, 1994 Seminar (co-sponsored by the Domestic Policy Council of the White House and the IEL Policy Exchange), 1994, $10

Dollars and Sense: Diverse Perspectives on Block Grants and the Personal Responsibility Act (produced cooperatively by the IEL Policy Exchange, the American Youth Policy Forum and The Finance Project), 1995, $5

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The Institute for Educational Leadership is a nonprofit organization
that supports policies, programs and practices
to improve society by strengthening educational opportunities
for children and youth.

The IEL Policy Exchange promotes policies, programs and practices
that foster effective and collaborative initiatives
on issues affecting children, families and communities
through seminars and site visits,
research, publications and other activities.

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